

Interview with Ian Crookenden
Session 1 (2/19/2020)
Timed Log

[00:00:08.00]

Crookenden was born in New Zealand in 1943. At age nine his parents gave him a tennis racket and he would play with his brother. Entered a junior tournament and continued playing from that point. He played mainly in New Zealand until age 15, when the New Zealand Tennis Federation sent him to play in New South Wales, Australia. He lost in the finals to a young Australian tennis player, John Newcombe.

[00:01:53.22]

In the late 50s and early 60s tennis was controlled by the federation or organization of each country, which would send players internationally to play, if a player was out of favor with the organization, they could be blackballed.

[00:02:37.08]

After a bout of pneumonia, Crookenden decided that he wanted to see the world and play for his country. Tennis was one of the sports that the New Zealand Federation supported financially. At 17 Crookenden was chosen and was the youngest player at that time representing his country.

[00:03:39.09]

Crookenden explains why the federation was able to support tennis more than other sports. Tennis players still had to be competitive to secure support.

[00:05:31.25]

During that time almost all tennis players in New Zealand were amateur players. Crookenden took lessons from the one professional player that he could recall. This player was originally from England, but all other players were amateurs. Most played or trained through Federations. Federations would support developing players for international matches, which were played abroad due to New Zealand's isolated location. Crookenden played most of his matches outside New Zealand. He describes playing in the Davis Cup Finals as an honorary member of the Mexican tennis team in 1962.

[00:09:39.29]

In order to progress his tennis career, Crookenden made the decision to leave New Zealand and come to the US. Crookenden describes why UCLA became his choice, classes and credits were more easily transferred to the New Zealand education system from a State University than a private one, plus the weather in Los Angeles resembled New Zealand's. After Crookenden received a call from Coach J D Morgan and got advice from a fellow New Zealand player, he eventually decided on UCLA.

[00:14:30.04]

Crookenden came to the UCLA in September 1963. Crookenden played in matches throughout the US during the summer before arriving at UCLA.

[00:15:36.15]

Crookenden shares his first impressions of the US. Before arriving he saw the US as a melting pot, but discovered during the summer of 1963 that there was discrimination, segregation and injustice. He found what he witnessed to be contrary to what he had learned in school.

[00:18:21.28]

He studied history at UCLA. Playing the Davis Cup in Israel during the Eichmann Trail (1961). Traveling and playing between the Middle East and Israel.

[00:21:03.24]

Crookenden, racial dynamic and country club culture.

[00:22:21.06]

Meeting Arthur Ashe. Crookenden met Ashe before attending UCLA. He played tennis competitively for two years before college, whereas Ashe's competitive years emerged after college. They became teammates during Crookenden's sophomore and Ashe's senior years.

[00:24:12.11]

Ashe was young and still in his formative years. Was not as confident as he would later become. Crookenden's social experience in college was atypical and more mature than others. He was married by his junior year.

[00:25:50.08]

Crookenden's first impressions of UCLA. Remembers the campus as big and needing a car to get around. Remembers the mood on campus the day President John Kennedy was assassinated.

[00:28:37.24]

Social life on campus. Crookenden was one of the first foreign athletes at UCLA. Clubs and groups on campus, ethnic and cultural groups. Cultural and ethnic diversity on the UCLA tennis team.

[00:32:24.20]

Diversity in athletic teams at UCLA. Remembering Coach Wooden.

[00:34:51.08]

Working with JD Morgan, his one-on-one method of coaching. How Coach Morgan would coach and challenge Ashe and Crookenden.

[00:37:13.27]

Ashe and Crookenden trained together for one year and played on a team together for one year. How Ashe and Crookenden ended up on the team together. Playing at the NCAA

championships in 1965. Ashe and Crookenden won during this competition. By 1966 Ashe had graduated and Crookenden played in the NCAA Championships with Charlie Pasarell.

[00:41:49.29]

Crookenden described Ashe as reserved, but relaxed on the court. He sensed that Ashe felt he was representing more than just himself and this contributed to his reserved, introspective nature. He felt that Ashe consciously controlled himself and that affected him on the court. Ashe had a great backhand and the finesse in his strokes aided in the transition from wood racquets to new materials.

[00:46:07.04]

Ashe had a tranquility on the court. Off the court Ashe was more comfortable and relaxed with other minorities. Describes a moment when Ashe met Crookenden's wife. Crookenden never saw Ashe in a situation where he was out of control. Ashe was always polished. Crookenden never had classes with Ashe but knew he was in ROTC.

[00:50:23.24]

Winning the NAAs was a moment of closeness between Ashe and Crookenden. They played doubles.

[00:52:50.00]

Crookenden didn't stay in touch with Ashe after their UCLA experience. Crookenden went on to manage and have his own clubs and teach. They would run into each other at tournaments, games and events.

[00:54:29.22]

Ashe spoke at Wake Forest University (North Carolina) when Crookenden was coaching there in 1989. Crookenden reached out to Ashe to speak. They were interested in Ashe not only because of his tennis success, but also because of his efforts in education and civil rights. (Ashe spoke at Wake Forest University on September 5 1989, it was the 25th anniversary of the passing of the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964).

[00:56:44.04]

Ashe seemed more confident and self assured when Crookenden saw him at Wake Forest.

[00:58:50.00]

Ashe's impact on young people through the years. Young people today are not as aware of Ashe's legacy, yet it is cemented in the tennis community. Crookenden feels that if Ashe had continued on living he would have been involved in politics.

[01:01:22.02]

Crookenden contemplates Ashe's role in politics. Ashe was smart, private and liked to compete.

[01:03:13.01]

Crookenden last saw Ashe at an Intercollegiate Tennis Association Convention in Florida in December 1992. He and Crookenden went to grab a sandwich. Crookenden remembers that Ashe's illness was noticeable, he was frail. At that moment he realized how serious Ashe's illness was. Crookenden attended Ashe's funeral service in Richmond, VA. Ashe's legacy.